

EDITED
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THE MAN
OF THE HOUSE.

VOLUME 9.

PUBLISHED BY D. LOTHROP & CO., BOSTON, MASS.

NUMBER 41.

Saturday, October 14, 1882.

Monthly, 15 cents.

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Semi-monthly, 25 cents.

Weekly, 50 cents a year.

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

THERE was a good deal of excitement one evening in the new house where the Stone family lived. Something very interesting had happened. Beth and Reuben were invited out to spend the evening for the first time in their lives. You boys and girls who have been to a children's party or entertainment of some sort as often as once a month ever since you can remember, will be astonished at this, but it is true. Hattie Turner, a young girl in Beth's Sabbath-school class, and her brother who was in Reuben's class, were to have a candy pull, with plenty of apples, and nuts, and games, and a good time generally; and Beth was braiding her hair in lovely silky braids, and tying it with blue ribbon to match her dress.

"You are too much dressed up for a candy pull, and that's a fact," her mother said, eying the blue merino with doubtful and yet with satisfied eyes. Beth did look so nice in it!

Miss Hunter came briskly to the rescue. There was an alarmed look in Beth's eyes; if she should have to take the blue merino off and wear her brown calico, she felt almost as though it would break her heart. "Oh, she won't hurt her dress; that white apron covers the front nicely, and she can roll up her sleeves when she pulls candy; and she is kind of special company, you know, being so much of a stranger, so it will do for her to be dressed up pretty well."

Reuben couldn't help laughing a little as he looked down at his new gray jacket and pants, cut just the right length, and trimmed with as many buttons as the rest of the boys wore. The idea of Beth being too much dressed up to go to a place was something so new and so funny.

"She must match my new jacket and pantalcons, you know, mother," he said gayly; and the mother privately thought that she would have to look very well indeed in order to match her boy.

Reuben's thoughts, busy with contrasts, went back to the old home. "I wonder what Kate and Timmy Blake would say if they could see us, Beth?" He asked the question with a sort of glee, but not in a tone that you would call a proud one.

"I wonder how poor Mrs. Blake has got along all this cold winter," Mrs. Stone said, with a sigh for her old neighbor and one friend in the city. "Poor thing! I've thought of her a dozen times this winter, and wished she could have a little bit of the comfort that we are having so much of."

"Couldn't we have them down here for a few days, mother, and get them rested up? Maybe Timmy could get work here; Katie could, anyhow, and Mrs. Blake."

"Have company?" said Mrs. Stone, smiling at this new and not altogether unpleasant idea. "Maybe we can, Reuben, when the summer is fairly here. I doubt if they could get enough together to pay their fare though."

"Let's try for it," said Miss Hunter, nodding her head with the air of one who saw a way to accomplish it.

So Beth and Reuben started to their first party, their hearts warm with the thought of what they, in their happier lot, might do for their friends.

It was Miss Hunter who held the light at the side door and waited while Beth went back for a handkerchief; it was in this way that she got a chance to speak that last word to Reuben.

"I suppose you mean to look out for your colors to-night, my boy?"

Then Reuben looked down again at the neat gray suit, and the trim necktie with a dash of red in it, and smiled. He knew that Miss Hunter did not mean those colors; no danger but he would look out for them; but he didn't quite see what she could mean.

"I don't know of any chance to show them to-night; it



BETH DRESSING FOR THE PARTY.

is just a few girls and boys to pull candy and eat apples and nuts. There won't be any way to show the colors that you mean."

"Humph!" said Miss Hunter, looking wise. "Don't you believe it. I never heard of a parcel of boys and girls being together for half an hour but what the Lord gave them a chance to show their colors. Why, Satan looks out for that, even if the Lord didn't. He is

always putting in words and actions to help folks backwards, and them that won't go backwards and have a Captain strong enough to lead them forward, have a chance to follow him."

Reuben leaned against the side of the little table and looked thoughtful. "But, Miss Hunter," he began, "these are not rough fellows like some of those in our shop; they are well-behaved boys, — real gentlemanly fellows always, and the girls will be there too. I don't believe I'll have any chances to-night."

"Just you keep watch and see if you don't. I've seen gentlemanly boys and nice girls set a whole nest of snares for careless feet. You make me think of a nephew of mine to whom I once gave the verse: 'My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not.' He was going off to the woods with a party of boys. 'Auntie,' says he, 'the verse doesn't fit; there isn't a sinner among them; those boys are ever so much better than I am.'

"You keep a lookout, my boy," said I. "It's my opinion you'll find the sinners enticing you as hard as they can, before you are an hour older. You will have need for the verse if Satan is as smart as I have reason to think he is. Well, in the evening he was pretty quiet and thoughtful, and when I got a chance I asked him about the verse. 'Auntie,' said he, 'it just exactly fitted. I found a whole troop of sinners right in my own heart enticing me as hard as they could; I had to fight them with all my might; it would have been so easy to have consented to what they wanted.'

"Whew!" said Reuben, with a queer little whistle; "I never thought of that."

Then came Beth. "I thought I should never find my hem-stitched one," she said in apology for having kept him so long. "I put it away so carefully I could not think what I did with it."

"You are not used to having places for things," said Reuben, reaching for his cap, and feeling that Beth had been gone none too long for him to get his colors righted.

"No," she said, with a happy little laugh. "For that matter I'm not used to having things. But, Reuben, I'm getting used to it very fast. Now you know it isn't quite three months that we have been living here, and yet it seems to me as though I could not go back to the city and live in the old way; I think I should die. And it seems as though we had always known what we would have for dinner, and could always have meat once a day, and had never thought of such a thing as shivering over the stove to save coal. What makes people get used to things so fast, do you suppose? It isn't that I've forgotten the hard places; I guess I haven't! I wish I could, though; I wouldn't like to have the girls know how hard we used to have it."

"Why not?" said Reuben wonderingly. "I should think you would like to have them know all about it, so they would understand better what hard times poor folks have, and what fun it is to help them. Why don't you?"

"Oh, because I don't," said Beth, and she tossed her pretty brown head, and looked and felt in a way that Reuben, not having a streak of that kind of pride about him, did not understand.

I suppose it would be difficult to describe to you how very much Beth Stone enjoyed the first part of her first evening out. The girls were disposed to be especially kind to her. The fact was, they liked the pretty little city girl, with her pale cheeks and delicate looks, and quiet, graceful ways, for Beth was one of those who had grown graceful by merely watching others at a distance. She had never had bright ribbons to wear in her hair before, nor a lace ruffle for her dress, yet she knew as well how to tie the ribbons, and just how high to

baste the ruffle, as though she had worn them all her life. Hadn't she studied other little girls by the hour together? Well, the little girls at the candy pull studied her, and liked her much; so did the boys. They gathered around her and asked questions. She knew a great deal about the city to which some of them had never been; she had used her eyes to good purpose, and could describe the park, and the fountain, and the great store on Broadway that was like a good-sized town in itself, and many of the other wonders, in a way that astonished the listeners, even Reuben, who hadn't an idea that Beth could talk so well. It seems almost a pity that any other subject should have come up for discussion that evening.

It was Arthur Holmes who suddenly drew the interest to himself by this beginning: "Oh, I've got the richest thing to tell you. Halley Parsons has come home. Did you know he had come? I was up there yesterday and saw him. Well, you know little Teddy, the washerwoman's boy that Judge Porter is sending up there to school? You don't know him, Reuben, do you? A funny little chap who is smart with his books, and Judge Porter has taken a notion to him and sent him off with his son to school. Halley says they have the richest fun with him. He told me about one scrape this winter. They have big rooms in the boarding-house, with double beds, and cots or something, and that brings six of the fellows in a room. Well, Teddy, you know, joined the Church just before he went away. He's a real good little fellow, but he's an awful coward, and Halley, it seems, thought he would have some fun, and he told the boys in Teddy's room; and the first night they all talked and laughed a blue streak when they were getting ready for bed; they watched for Teddy's Bible to come out, because Halley had told them that he read in the Bible, and prayed every night as regular as the minister. But it seems they were too much for him that night; he left the Bible in the bottom of his trunk. Finally a boy named Case who slept nearest to the gas-light, gave the word that it would be out in two minutes, and out it went. Almost, that is. He gave the other fellows a wink, and left the least little glimmer of it, not so you would notice it at all, Hal said, but so he could turn it on again in a twinkling. Then for a few minutes every thing was quiet, Teddy in bed with the rest. Pretty soon they heard a little softly motion, not more noise than a mouse would make. 'What's that?' said Case, and he turned on a blaze of light. There sat Teddy on the foot of his bed, shivering as though he had an ague fit. Then Hal said you ought to have heard Case tell how sorry he was that he turned out the light before Teddy was in bed. 'I didn't notice,' he said; 'I thought everybody was ready. I ought to have paid attention to you, when you were a new boy.' Then he offered to help him, and said it was a cold night, and finally he hopped out of bed and tucked poor Teddy up head and ears, and turned down the light again. Then all was still, and pretty soon some of the fellows began to snore as though they were asleep. Then they heard that little creeping noise again. This time Case waited until he knew by the sound that Teddy must be slipped off of the bed, then he flashed the light up, and there stood Teddy shivering and looking like a goose. I'd have given a dollar to have seen him!"

Here Arthur stopped to laugh, nearly all of his listeners joining in. "Well, Case questioned him again, and he stammered and muttered something, wouldn't own, you know, that he wanted to say his prayers. Case was very sorry for him; was afraid he was sick; hoped he would be able to sleep, and all that sort of thing, and tucked him into bed and turned out the light again, or rather didn't turn it out. After that, Halley said it

was still so long that they began to think the little fellow had given up his prayers, or said them with his head ducked under the bed-clothes, and one or two of them were just dozing off to sleep when that mouse-like noise was heard again, and Teddy was evidently crawling out. This time Case waited until the youngster was fairly on his knees, in the middle of his prayer, maybe, then he flashed up the light, and all the fellows sat up in bed, and there was Teddy out on the cold floor with his bare feet, nothing around him, kneeling down, with his eyes tight shut and his lips going as if he was saying forty spelling-lessons at once. Well, sir, Halley said you never saw any thing so funny. He said if he had been expelled the next morning he'd have had to laugh. And all the boys just roared. Teddy he hopped up and dashed into bed, and hid his head under the clothes, and Halley says they believe he cried half the night."

Now I really don't know how to account for the way in which those boys and girls listened to this story; there must have been among them those who thought that a shameful, as well as a silly trick had been played on poor Teddy, yet every one of them joined in Arthur's laugh, save Reuben Watson Stone. He sat up straight, his cheeks red, his eyes flashing, himself so indignant, especially over the faint little giggle which Beth gave, that he could hardly control his voice enough to say: "Well, I must say that a meaner trick in a small way, without any thing to be got out of it, I don't know as I ever heard of, and I've heard of a good many. The newsboys and bootblacks are always getting up some sort of trick that is twice as bright as this, and not any meaner. If I were Halley Parsons I'd be ashamed of myself for telling it and calling it fun. I didn't know that rich gentlemen's sons that had chances to learn, and all that, were so mean."

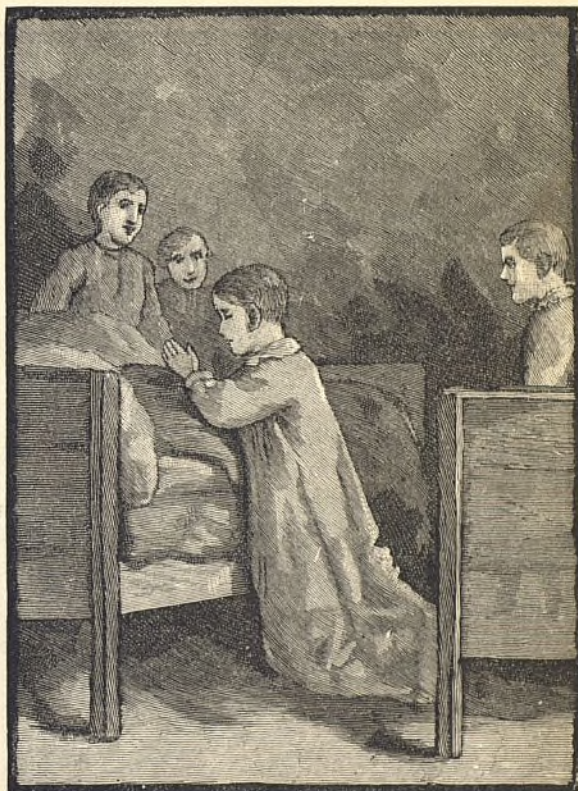
Then the girls looked at one another, and at Beth, whose cheeks flamed now like peonies, two or three of the boys whistled, Stephen Miller said, "A lecture on Morals, one night only, admission two peanuts," and began to pass them around. Then others of the boys and some of the girls laughed; Arthur Holmes said: "Pshaw! Nobody meant any harm, it was only a little fun; it didn't hurt the youngster, either; and he needn't have been such a coward as to be afraid to say his prayers, if he wanted to."

"That is true," said Reuben in a quieter voice. He was already sorry that he had spoken so sharply, and did not believe that he would have done so if Beth had not given that little laugh. "That is true; I'm sorry the little fellow hadn't more pluck; but I must say I can't see the fun in a lot of older fellows doing a mean thing because a little one has done a silly thing. I don't know how you folks that have had chances argue about things; I've never been to school, and I've never had much to do with boys who could go, but I know there isn't a street boy in the city who would play so mean a trick on one of his own mates as that; they stick together and try to help each other; and I supposed all boys did."

It had its effect on the boys, this frank confession that he had had no chances, and knew more about street boys than he did about those who were carefully taught in happy homes; had Reuben given his opinion without this explanation, there were those present who would have been rude enough to ask him where he got his education, what boarding school he attended, or whether they taught manners in the box factory, or some such silly thing, to remind him that they were, most of them, boys whose fathers took care of them, and sent them to school, while he had to work hard for a living. As it was, they didn't know what to say. I think perhaps some of them were a little cross over Reuben's bold

hint that the city newsboys and bootblacks were ahead of them in politeness, but they seemed at a loss how to answer him, and all were glad, I think, that just at that moment the candy was announced ready to pull.

But there was one little girl for whom the rest of the evening was almost spoiled, and that was Beth. It was not on account of that silly little laugh, though she was a good deal ashamed of it, or would have been, had she given herself a chance to think. The story had not amused her at all; in fact she had thought it a shameful and stupid trick, but the truth was, poor little Beth's pretty head was turned with a desire to be like other people. The boys and girls who had always worn nice clothes, and had gone out of evenings to candy pulls,



TEDDY AT PRAYERS.

and had pleasant times together in a hundred ways that were new to her, had laughed over the story, so she Beth Stone must needs do so; that is the way she reasoned. Of course, being in this frame of mind, Reuben's frank statement that he had never had any chances, or been to school like others, and that he was quite well acquainted with newsboys and bootblacks, and other dreadful beings like them, was like live coals dropped on her comfort. How *could* Reuben talk so! All these uncomfortable thoughts went racing through her brain as she pulled and pulled at her candy, determined to have hers the whitest strand in the room.

The talk went on gayly enough, and but for Reuben's noticing that most of the boys had very little to say to him, it would have been pleasant work to pull that candy. As it was, he found himself somewhat in a corner, working alone; not a boy but rather resented being told that he had laughed over a mean trick.

Still, I think the little cloud of discomfort would have blown over, and things would have settled into pleasantness again if it had not been for the next thing that happened after the candy was pulled, and much of it eaten.

The next thing was, that after sticky hands had been washed, and little wads of candy had been picked from chairs and carpet, and the company had all gone into the sitting-room for some games, the dining-room door opened, and black Nancy appeared with a large fruit-basket of apples in one hand, and balancing on her head in a graceful way, the largest pitcher Reuben had ever seen.

"Oh, oh!" shouted John Stuart, who was a nephew of their host, "apples and cider! I forgot that we had any cider. Boys, I tell you it is prime; just the right taste to it."

In a twinkling a row of sparkling goblets was arranged on the table, and brimmed with the beautiful amber-colored cider.

"Doesn't it look too lovely for any thing!" declared



BLACK NANCY WITH THE APPLES AND CIDER.

little Addie Parker, clasping her hands in a flutter of satisfaction. "I do love cider dearly, and we never have any at our house, because aunt Fanny doesn't like it; so silly in her!"

"Why, can't you have any thing at your house that your aunt Fanny doesn't like?" This question was asked in a very wondering tone by Arthur Holmes, and while the others laughed, Addie explained:

"Oh, she doesn't approve of it, you know; doesn't like to have the boys drink it; she is afraid they will be drunkards;" and Addie's laugh rang out in a silvery way, as though becoming drunkards was a very funny thing; "so out of politeness to her, papa won't have it, because she is the housekeeper, you know, and he says she ought not to have in the cellar what she doesn't like."

"The idea!" said Kate Wells; "I thought everybody drank cider." Now Kate Wells was one of the best-dressed little girls in the room; in fact, she was always

well dressed, and she lived in an elegant house, with lovely lawns about it, and a carriage drive up to the door, and she rode on horseback a wonderful little pony of her own, and her father was the richest man in town. I wonder, after all I have told you, if you are astonished at Beth Stone for taking sips of cider with the rest? Little bits of sips they were, and they did not taste good to her at all; in fact, she told herself that she did not see what they wanted to make such a fuss over cider for, she hated it. Yet she sipped it. Reuben was astonished. He stared over at Beth in a way that made her glowing cheeks feel as though they would blaze; and she even spilled a little of her cider on the blue merino; Reuben began to feel as though he really was not acquainted with Beth. When before, in all her life, had she gone contrary to his views and plans? She had thought as he thought, liked what he liked, and hated what he hated with all her earnest little heart, until now, when something, the name of which he did not know, had come in between them. Even if somebody had told him that the name of this enemy was pride, I am not sure that he would have understood, he knew so little about such an enemy.

"No, I thank you," he said when his glass of cider was passed, and he said it in a louder and firmer tone than he would have used had not Beth been sitting opposite to him just then, sipping hers.

"What!" said black Nancy; "ain't got a boy here that don't like cider!"

"No," said Reuben again in that very clear, firm tone, "I like it first-rate; but I won't drink it all the same."

"Why not?"

"Because I have signed a temperance pledge, for one thing."

"Ho!" said Harry Jones, crossly; "temperance pledges have nothing to do with cider; everybody drinks it."

"My pledge has something to do with cider: it speaks it right out; and if it didn't I would have it put in; I have been thinking about it a good deal, all this winter, and I've found lots of temperance folks, and a good many books that don't believe in cider at all."

"But this is nothing but sweet cider." This Stella Burns said, speaking a little timidly; she belonged to a temperance society, and had signed a pledge that had cider in it, and she wanted to do right, but she had made her weak little conscience believe that the pledge couldn't possibly have meant sweet cider, for everybody said that did no more harm than water.

The simple truth was, that she had not heard "everybody" say any such thing; only three of her school-mates had said so.

"There isn't any such thing as sweet cider," declared Reuben boldly, "not of the kind that people drink; it begins to have alcohol in it before it is a day old, and people don't like the taste of it until it does have."

"Where is your cider mill?" asked Arthur Holmes, and the others laughed. But Harry Jones had no idea of letting the argument go, and he began to question and cross-question in a way that showed his conscience was a little touched; and Reuben answered in a way that showed he had studied the matter and was prepared to argue. But some of the boys had no idea of getting themselves worsted in an argument; they had not forgiven Reuben for refusing to laugh with them over the trick played on Teddy; they were in no mood to hear more from him.

"Poh!" said Arthur Holmes; "let him alone, what's the use of talking? It's natural enough that he shouldn't want to drink cider; his great grandfather and his grandfather were both drunkards, and his father when he was a small boy laughed at another boy for being afraid to say his prayers, and then to drown his remorse took to drinking cider, and was never heard of afterwards."